



I-81 Improvement Concepts

Fact Sheet

November 2005



Many people have asked for an update on the I-81 Corridor Improvement Study. During this stage of the study, potential solutions to problems in the I-81 corridor are identified and evaluated. Details of this work will be contained in a Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which is being developed by VDOT for the Federal Highway Administration under the guidelines of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

VDOT and FHWA want to give citizens a general idea of the types of solutions that are being considered. The following information is preliminary and subject to change prior to the release of an approved Tier 1 DEIS. VDOT and FHWA value public input, and comments or questions received about this information will be considered as part of the public availability and comment process for the Tier 1 DEIS.

Although making this information available to the public is not required by NEPA, VDOT and FHWA are providing it as an update on the status of the I-81 Corridor Improvement Study.

More than 200 potential solutions to future problems on I-81 are being considered in the I-81 Corridor Improvement Study. Each potential solution is being evaluated against conditions expected on I-81 in the year 2035 to see if it will meet future needs. Potential solutions also are being evaluated to ensure that they do not exceed future needs of the corridor.

Some solutions will be studied in detail in the Tier 1 DEIS. The document, when it is published, will include reasons for studying these solutions in detail as well as reasons for not studying others in detail.

The potential solutions generally fall into eight groups, which are described on the reverse side. The reason that there are more than 200 total potential solutions is that each group also has various tolling scenarios applied to it – such as low, medium and high toll amounts. Some groups also have lane variations – such as one additional lane or two additional lanes or one lane for trucks only, etc.

(Continued on reverse side)

Highway Concepts

These provide additional travel lanes in each direction for all of I-81. This group includes one lane in each direction, two lanes in each direction, and three lanes in each direction. Another highway concept included in this group is "variable," meaning that the number of additional lanes in each direction could vary from one to two to three, depending upon traffic demand.

Rail Concepts

These consist of a new railroad as well as increasing the length of and adding sidings at various locations along Norfolk Southern's Piedmont line and Southern Shenandoah line. Norfolk Southern Railroad was involved in the process to develop these concepts.

Combination Concepts

These are various combinations of the stand-alone highway concepts and rail concepts as described above.

Two-lane Exclusive Truckway

This involves the construction of one exclusive truck lane in each direction that is separated from the exclusive car lanes by a concrete barrier and includes the construction of ramps to connect the truck lanes to the existing interchanges. In these concepts, cars are restricted to the car lanes, and trucks are restricted to the truck lanes. This concept is being studied with no additional car lanes, one additional car lane in each direction, and two additional car lanes in each direction.

Four-Lane Exclusive Truckway

This involves the construction of two exclusive truck lanes in each direction that are separated from the exclusive car lanes by a concrete barrier and includes the construction of ramps to connect the truck lanes to the existing interchanges. In these concepts, cars are restricted to the car lanes, and trucks are restricted to the truck lanes. This concept is being studied with no additional car lanes, one additional car lane in each direction, and two additional car lanes in each direction.

Four-Lane Non-Exclusive Truckway

This involves the construction of two non-exclusive truck lanes in each direction that are separated from the other lanes by rumble strips. This allows trucks to use the existing interchanges without constructing additional ramps. In these concepts, cars are restricted to the general-purpose lanes, and trucks may use either the truck lanes or the general-purpose lanes. These concepts are being studied with no additional general-purpose lanes, one additional general-purpose lane in each direction, and two additional general-purpose lanes in each direction.

Four-Lane Exclusive Car Lanes

This involves the construction of two exclusive car lanes in each direction that are separated from the truck lanes by a concrete barrier and includes the construction of ramps to connect the car lanes to the existing interchanges. In these concepts, the existing lanes in each direction would be used only by trucks. The concept also is being considered with the addition of one lane in each direction that will be used by trucks only as well as two additional lanes in each direction that will be used by trucks only.

Four-Lane Non-Exclusive Car Lanes

This involves the construction of two exclusive car lanes in each direction that are separated from the other lanes by a concrete barrier and includes the construction of ramps to connect the car lanes to the existing interchanges. This also permits cars the option of traveling in the general-purpose lanes with trucks. This concept is being studied with no additional general-purpose lanes, one additional general-purpose lane in each direction, and two additional general-purpose lanes in each direction.